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Request for inclusion of an additional item in the agenda of the fifty-fourth session

International recognition of the Day of Vesak

Letter dated 28 October 1999 from the representatives of Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, India, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Republic of Korea, Spain, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

We have the honour to request, in accordance with rule 15 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, the inclusion in the agenda of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly of an additional item, entitled "International recognition of the Day of Vesak".

An explanatory memorandum and a draft resolution, as required by rule 20 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, are enclosed (see annexes I and II).

(*Signed*) Anwarul **Chowdhury**
Permanent Representative
of Bangladesh

(*Signed*) Om **Pradhan**
Permanent Representative
of Bhutan

(*Signed*) **Ouch** Borith
Permanent Representative
of Cambodia

(*Signed*) Kamalesh **Sharma**
Permanent Representative
of India

99-34434 (E) 121199

(*Signed*) Khenthong **Nuanthasing**
Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the
Permanent Mission of the
Lao People's Democratic Republic
to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Hussain **Shihab**
Permanent Representative
of Maldives

(*Signed*) Jargalsaikhany **Enkhsaikhan**
Permanent Representative
of Mongolia

(*Signed*) Win **Mra**
Permanent Representative
of Myanmar

(*Signed*) Narendra Bikram **Shah**
Permanent Representative
of Nepal

(*Signed*) Inam ul **Haque**
Permanent Representative
of Pakistan

(*Signed*) Felipe **Mabilangan**
Permanent Representative
of the Philippines

(*Signed*) **Lee** See-young
Permanent Representative
of the Republic of Korea

(*Signed*) Inocencio **Arias**
Permanent Representative
of Spain

(*Signed*) John **de Saram**
Permanent Representative
of Sri Lanka

(*Signed*) Asda **Jayanama**
Permanent Representative
of Thailand

(*Signed*) Volodymyr Yu. **Yel'chenko**
Permanent Representative
of Ukraine

Annex I

Explanatory memorandum

International recognition of the Day of Vesak

I

"Vesak", the Day of the Full Moon in the month of May, is the most sacred day to millions to Buddhists around the world.

It was on the Day of Vesak two and a half millennia ago, in the year 623 B.C., that the Buddha was born. It was also on the Day of Vesak that the Buddha attained enlightenment, and it was on the Day of Vesak that the Buddha in his eightieth year passed away.

II

The teachings of the Buddha, and his message of compassion and peace and goodwill have moved millions.

Millions around the world follow the teachings of the Buddha and on the Day of Vesak commemorate the birth, the attainment of enlightenment and the passing away of the Buddha.

A Message from the former Secretary-General, Javier Perez de Cuellar, to Buddhists on the Day of Vesak in May 1986 reads:

> "For Buddhists everywhere it is indeed a felicitous opportunity, while commemorating the birth, enlightenment and passing away of Guatama Buddha, to celebrate his message of compassion and devotion to the service of humanity. This message is today perhaps more relevant than ever before.
>
> "Peace, understanding and a vision of humanity that supersedes national and other international differences are essential if we are to cope with the complexities of the nuclear age.
>
> "This philosophy lies at the heart of the Charter of the United Nations and should be prominent in all our thinking, especially during this International Year of Peace."

III

An International Buddhist Conference held in Sri Lanka in November 1998 expressed the hope that the United Nations would accord the Day of Vesak international recognition.

The International Buddhist Conference also hoped that the Day of Vesak would be accorded the status of a holiday of the United Nations. However, we are informed and appreciate that a number of difficulties of an administrative, budgetary and other nature would arise if the General Assembly were to seek to create an additional annual United Nations holiday.

We would, in the circumstances, request, as an alternative, that the General Assembly consider the adoption of a resolution that would;

(a) Recognize that the Day of Vesak, the Day of the Full Moon in the month of May each year, is the day most sacred to Buddhists, who commemorate on that day, the birth of Buddha, his attainment of enlightenment and his passing away;

(b) Permit appropriate arrangements, without cost to the United Nations, to be made (in consultation with the relevant Offices of the Secretariat and the Permanent Missions that also wish to be consulted) for international observance of the Day of Vesak at United Nations Headquarters and other United Nations Offices.

Annex II

Draft resolution

International recognition of the Day of Vesak at United Nations Headquarters and other United Nations Offices

The General Assembly,

Acknowledging the hope expressed by the International Buddhist Conference, held in Sri Lanka in November 1998, that the Day of Vesak, the Day of the Full Moon in the month of May each year, be internationally recognized and, in particular, at United Nations Headquarters and other United Nations Offices,

Recognizing that the Day of the Full Moon in the month of May each year is the day most sacred to Buddhists, who commemorate on that day, the birth of the Buddha, his attainment of enlightenment and his passing away,

Considering that international recognition at United Nations Headquarters and other United Nations Offices would constitute acknowledgement of the contribution that Buddhism, one of the oldest religions in the world, has made, for over two and a half millennia, and continues to make to the spirituality of humanity,

Resolves that, without cost to the United Nations, appropriate arrangements shall be made for international observances of Vesak at United Nations Headquarters and other United Nations Offices, in consultation with the relevant United Nations Offices and with Permanent Missions that also wish to be consulted.